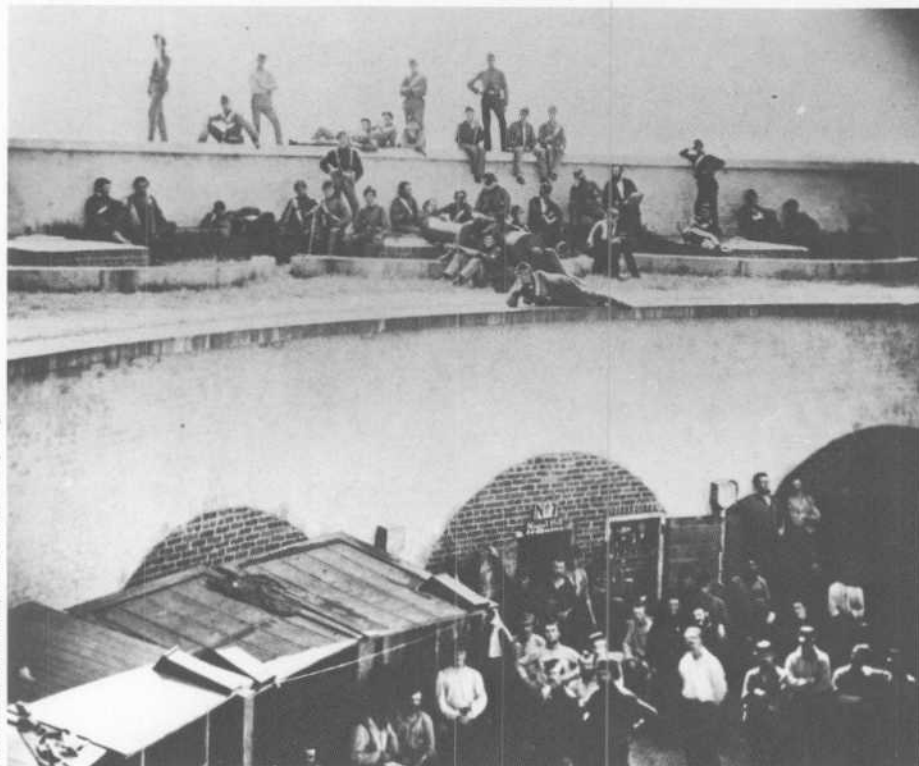
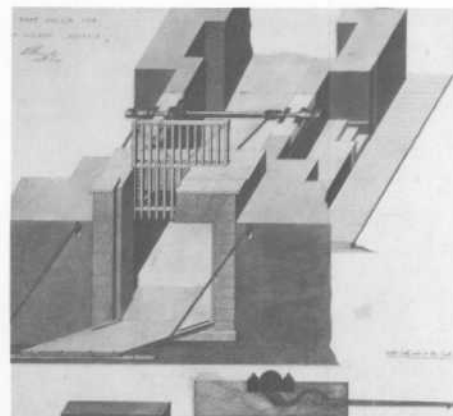


Coast Defense

Civil War soldiers at Castle Pinckney, Charleston Harbor.



Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion



National Archives

Plan for drawbridge and portcullis at Fort Pulaski, c.1846.

When the American Revolution began in 1775, numerous coastal fortifications already existed along the Atlantic coast to protect communities from pirate incursions and enemy raids. The British Royal Engineers, as well as individual colonies and local communities, built these structures, which varied from crude earthen and wooden batteries to strong masonry forts.

During the War for Independence, the combatants rehabilitated many of the existing coastal fortifications and constructed new ones. The small body of Continental Army Engineers accomplished some of the work. Then, when the war ended, the new country abandoned these works, deciding that the mili-

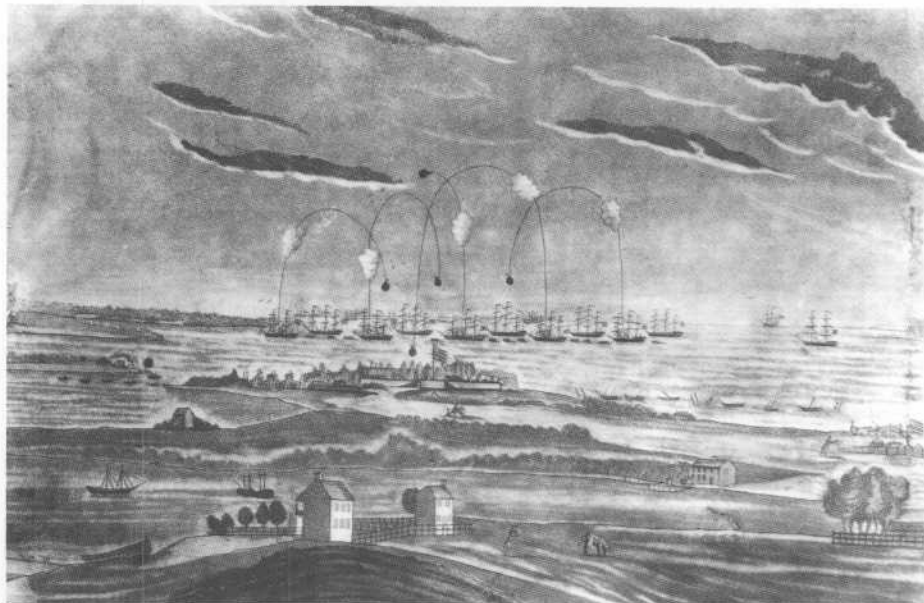
tia could man them, if necessary.

A decade later, in 1794, the United States, fearing attacks from other nations, undertook a construction program to provide fortifications for the protection of the major harbors and northern frontiers of the country. Until the 1860s, the Corps of Engineers planned and erected these works, which were often elaborate structures. Initially the Corps followed the prevalent French and British designs, but later developed its own, more modern ones. Fort Monroe in Virginia, Fort Adams in Rhode Island and Fort Washington in Maryland exhibit foreign influence while Fort Delaware, Delaware, and Fort Point, California, reflect American concepts.

Plan of Fort Washington, November 1823.

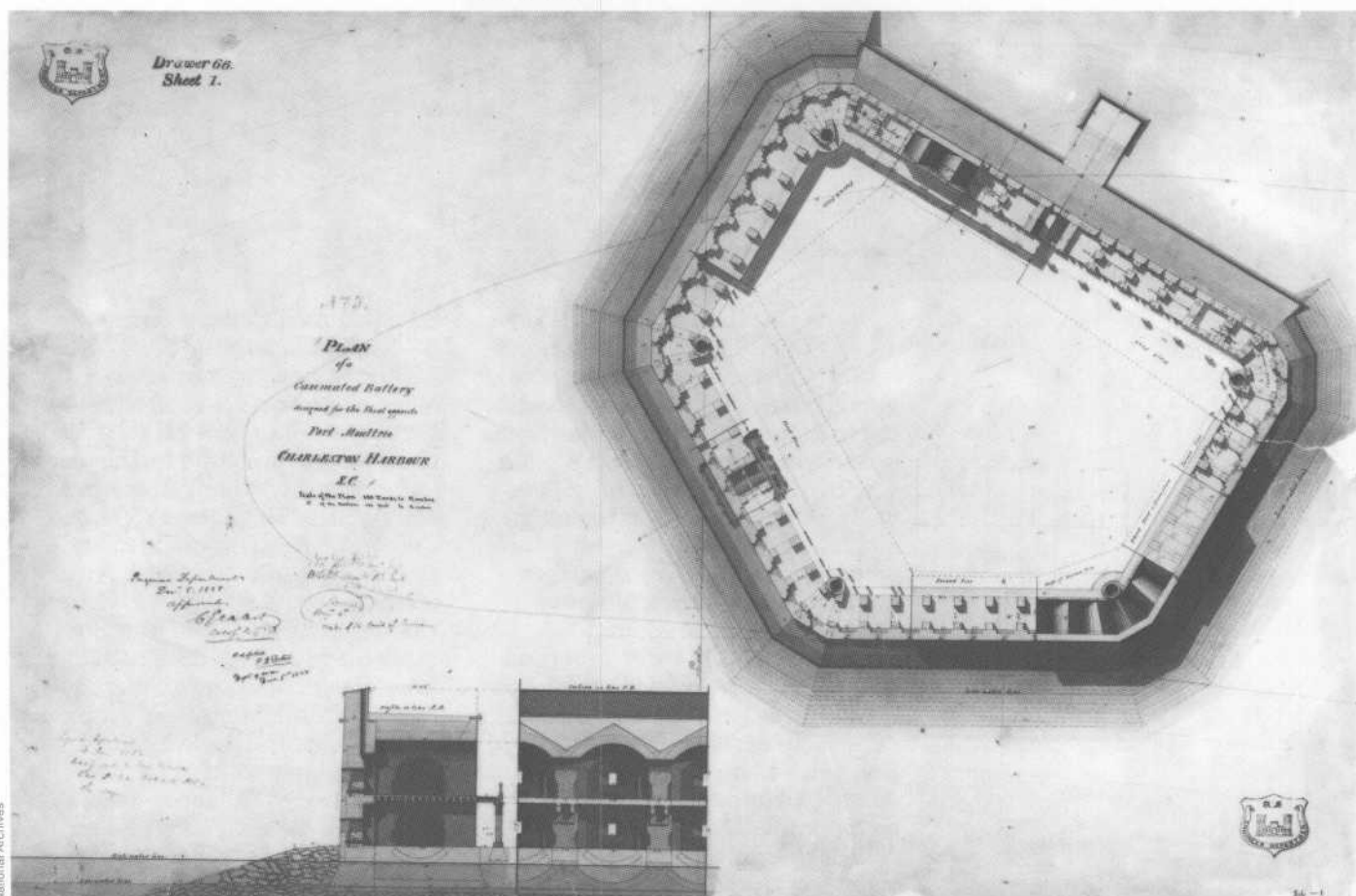
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Interior of Fort
Independence, Boston
Harbor, 1864.



Bombardment of Fort
McHenry, aquatint by John
Bower, undated.

Plan of Fort Sumter, Charleston
Harbor, c. 1828.

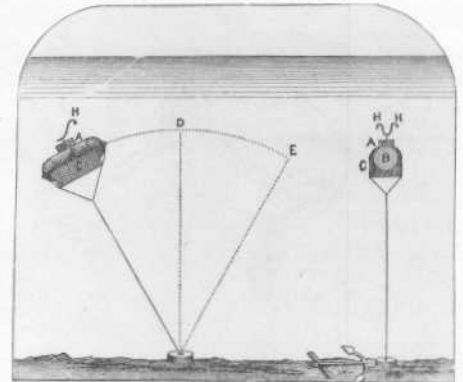


Inspection at Fort Monroe, Virginia, c.1900.

U.S. Military Academy Library



Diagram of torpedo used in the War of 1812, from Benson J. Lossing's *The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812*.



U.S. Military Academy Library

Although generally ungarrisoned, the country's coastal fortifications were a viable deterrent to foreign attack until the Civil War, when newly developed weapons rendered these defenses obsolete. Heavy rifled artillery, both land and naval, demolished brick, stone and masonry fortifications like Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and Fort Pulaski, Georgia. As a result, both Union and Confederate engineers began erecting coastal forts and batteries that were much more resilient to artillery fire.

Forsaking the outdated coastal fortifications, the engineers, acting upon a coast defense board's recommendations, began building concrete gun batteries to defend the coasts of the United States. Theoretically, long-range guns and mortars in these batteries would destroy enemy fleets before they reached a harbor. The Army engineers sometimes placed the batteries inside or in the immediate vicinity of old coastal forts. They purchased new land for others and with the acquisition of new territories at the end of the century, began erecting batteries in Hawaii, Panama and the Philippines. As artillery improved, the Corps constructed new batteries for bigger and more efficient guns.

Later, after World War II, new weapons like the airplane and missile rendered the batteries obsolete. By 1950 the Army ceased using them for their original purpose. Today the remnants of these batteries dot the coast and often appear from a distance to look like concrete bunkers.

In conjunction with its fortification and battery construction programs, Army engineers had other coast defense responsibilities. In the 19th century, they placed obstructions in the bays, rivers and harbors along the coasts. Progressing from chains to submarine mines, these obstructions were to slow down or

halt enemy vessels. Although the Coast Artillery Corps took over responsibility for submarine mines in 1901, the Corps continued to build casemates, storehouses, loading rooms and other structures for the mine defenses. The Corps also developed a protective concealment program for coast defenses evolving into the elaborate camouflage nets and paints in use during World War II.



Architect of the Capitol

Fort Sumter before the Civil War, from an oil painting by Seth Eastman.